

NCA  
VOC FOR IOP/FN  
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5627  
JOHN ROBERTS/MONROVIA

MARCH 17, 1978

# MONROVIA SUMMIT

ANNCR:

IN LIBERIA THIS WEEKEND, SIX AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE ARE MEETING TO TRY TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN GUINEA AND TWO OF ITS NEIGHBORS -- IVORY COAST AND SENEGAL. V.O.A. CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS IS IN MONROVIA FOR THE TALKS AND HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

ONE OF AFRICA'S LONGEST RUNNING FEUDS HAS BEEN BETWEEN PRESIDENT SEKOU TOURE OF GUINEA AND PRESIDENT LEOPOLD SENGHOR OF SENEGAL AND THE IVORY COAST LEADER FELIX HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY. IT ALL BEGAN IN NINETEEN FIFTY-EIGHT, JUST BEFORE EIGHT FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE TO GAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE FROM FRANCE. GUINEA DECIDED TO BREAK OFF TIES WITH FRANCE IMMEDIATELY. SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST OPTED FOR A LONGER TRANSITION AND TOOK THEIR INDEPENDENCE A FEW YEARS LATER.

DURING THESE EARLY YEARS, PRESIDENTS HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY AND SENGHOR CHOSE A MODERATE, WESTERN ORIENTED APPROACH TOWARD THEIR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POLICIES. PRESIDENT TOURE FOLLOWED A MORE HARD-LINE LEFTIST POLICY MODELLED ROUGHLY ALONG THE LINES OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. THOUSANDS OF GUINEAU'S TOP ECHELON PEOPLE WENT INTO EXILE IN NEIGHBORING SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST.

IN NINETEEN SEVENTY, THERE WAS AN ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT IN GUINEA, AND PRESIDENT TOURE ACCUSED SENEGAL OF HARBORING THE DISSIDENTS AND HELPING THEM IN THEIR OVERTHROW ATTEMPT. THE NEXT YEAR, THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY ATTEMPTED TO BRING ABOUT A RECONCILIATION. BUT THE O.A.U. RECOMMENDATIONS

WERE NOT OBSERVED, AND SENEGAL BROKE RELATIONS WITH GUINEA IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-TWO.

THE SITUATION REMAINED THAT WAY UNTIL RECENT MONTHS, WHEN PRESIDENT TOURE BEGAN TO TAKE A PERCEPTIVELY SOFTER LINE TOWARD THE EXILES, HIS NEIGHBORS AND HIS OWN ECONOMY. SOME OBSERVERS ATTRIBUTED THIS TO INTERNAL TROUBLES AND TO PRESSURE FROM OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICA. OTHERS POINTED TO THE EASING OF ECONOMIC POLICY IN CHINA SINCE THE DEATH OF CHAIRMAN MAO TSE-TUNG, WHICH MAY HAVE INFLUENCED PRESIDENT TOURE. WHATEVER THE EXACT CAUSE, THE LEADERS OF LIBERIA, TOGO AND GAMBIA SEIZED THE INITIATIVE AND PURSUADED THE THREE OTHER PARTIES TO MEET IN MONROVIA FOR ANOTHER TRY AT RECONCILING THEIR DIFFERENCES.

OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE SUMMIT HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING, INASMUCH AS FOREIGN MINISTERS OF ALL SIX COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY HELD INTENSE NEGOTIATIONS, AND MAY WELL HAVE DRAFTED A DECLARATION WHICH THE HEADS OF STATE ARE READY TO SIGN.

JS/RCS